County receives grant for health-care costs study

Snohomish County received a $30,000 grant from the Amerigroup Foundation on Thursday to study better ways to reduce costs associated with emergency health care within the region and across the state.

The results of the study, which will include data sharing and analysis among emergency care providers, will serve as a pilot for other communities to identify and provide better interventions and care for all those in need.

With a match from the county, the study has three overarching goals:
• Improving individuals’ access to care, including getting them the right services at the right time;
• Improving the overall health options and outcomes of individuals who now would typically be transported to an emergency room for treatment following a 9-1-1 call;
• Reducing taxpayer costs associated with health-care costs by lessening the need for emergency room transports because better treatment options are available.

“Because Snohomish County is responsible for overseeing millions in grant funds for human services, we should help coordinate better options for people who don’t necessarily need a trip to the emergency room when they call 9-1-1,” said Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon. “With the funding from the Amerigroup Foundation, we’ll be able to continue the work we’ve already started.”

Health-care costs continue to rise driven in part by the fact that individuals in need of services are not getting the right service at the right time. One example includes people in a non-medical-related crisis calling 9-1-1 and being transported to the emergency room, only to determine there is no acute medical need. These types of calls cost millions of dollars in Snohomish County alone, and, these individuals usually do not get the services they really need.

Snohomish County will conduct a comprehensive analysis of the hospital, fire district emergency services, mental-health and chemical-dependency databases to identify the frequency of high users within and across these systems. The study will determine how much cost there is to each system and determine how to implement more effective and lower-cost health services.
The county began its analysis six months ago and will use the results to improve access to care, improve health outcomes and reduce avoidable costs. One of the key factors of this study is the cooperation from all parts of the health-care system, including the 9-1-1 call takers, EMS responders and the emergency rooms and hospitals.

The outcome should be better coordination of alternative health-care options, regulatory reform and overall cost-savings opportunities.

Once patterns are identified, the county and its partners will be better equipped to look at ways to improve various health-care systems.

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**Evergreen Speedway receives NASCAR award**

Snohomish County’s Evergreen Speedway was chosen as one of NASCAR's top 10 home tracks across America during this year’s NASCAR Whelen All-American banquet in Charlotte, N.C.

Evergreen Speedway operators Doug and Traci Hobbs of High Road Promotions were presented with an Achievement Award for Outstanding Contributions to NASCAR by George Silberman, managing director of Racing Operations, at the 2012 Championship Banquet and Track Operators Meeting.

“High Road Promotions continues to bring energy and enthusiasm to the racetrack at the fairgrounds,” said Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon. “It has been a great partnership and we’re pleased for them that they have received this honor from the racing industry.”

The speedway, located at the Evergreen State Fairgrounds in Monroe, has been a NASCAR-sanctioned track for 24 of its 57 years. Specifically, the Whelen All-American Series (formerly the Dodge Weekly Series and Winston Racing Series) is a points championship for NASCAR-sanctioned local racetracks around the United States and Canada. The series is run at nearly 60 race tracks across North America.

Last year, the Evergreen Speedway was one of five NASCAR tracks nationwide selected to be part of the “NASCAR Green Clean Air” initiative, which included tree-planting projects at the Evergreen State Fairgrounds.

Leyland Cyprus trees were planted between the raceway’s northern end and the world-class equine facilities also located at the fairgrounds. The trees double as a protective buffer and clean the air.

Snohomish County selected High Road Promotions in 2010 to manage, operate and maintain the Evergreen Speedway. High Road Promotions has always been recognized for its enthusiasm, commitment to the community, regional approach to motorsports and respect within the racing community.

The County’s continued goals for the Speedway include expanding the variety of motorsports at the venue as well as the promotion of non-racing events to make the venue a year-round
**Drive sober or get pulled over during holidays**

Law enforcement agencies throughout Snohomish County and Washington state will again participate in the “Night of 1,000 Stars” impaired-driving traffic safety emphasis patrols.

For the past 22 years, law enforcement agencies throughout Washington have conducted “Night of 1,000 Stars” safety emphasis patrols. Each star symbolizes the badge worn by an on-duty law enforcement officer. This year’s patrols are scheduled for Friday and Saturday, Dec. 14 and 15.

This statewide enforcement will coordinate available resources to remove impaired drivers from the roads.

“Impaired driving caused by alcohol or another drug is the main reason people die in motor vehicle crashes,” said Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon. “Sadly, it doesn’t have to be this way. People can make a choice not to drive under the influence.”

Snohomish County law enforcement will be utilizing the Washington State Patrol’s Mobile Impaired Driving Unit (MIDU) to process DUI drivers quickly so that officers can get back out on the road.

“Officers, deputies and troopers will also be on the lookout for people who speed, drive aggressively, are not wearing a seatbelt, or violate other traffic laws.

These special overtime DUI & Target Zero emphasis patrols are paid for by a special grant from the Washington Traffic Safety Commission to reduce traffic deaths and disabling injuries to zero by the year 2030. The “Night of 1000 Stars” is a cooperative effort with traffic safety agencies throughout the state.

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